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Pulpit

VOL. XI, No. 2 FEBRUARY, 1958

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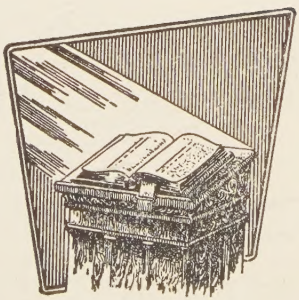

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

"Words from the Cross," this month's first theme, centers in five of the seven "last words" of our Lord, and are included for study and reflection during the Lenten season. Once before sermons on Psalm 23 were featured. This theme is again presented in response to requests from four of our readers.

Next month's themes will be "The Easter Confidence" and "Great Words of Faith: the Church," the third in our series on "great words" and timed for Pentecost preaching. The April topics will be "At Home With Christ" and "Lessons in Stewardship." The May emphases will be "What About the Lord's Day?" and "Great Words of Faith: the Word."

———o———

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

No Escape from Life by John Sutherland Bonnell, frequent contributor to **Pulpit Preaching**, is an extraordinary book for many reasons. In a field in which there have been many facile books, it is good to have the wise, judicious guidance of a man who after thirty years of pastoral counselling is able to make certain and often profound suggestions concerning the multiple problems common in every parish. The book has been written for both laymen and leaders, but pastors in particular ought to find here valuable material for both parish and pulpit ministries. The chapters on anxiety and alcoholism are especially helpful, and the

(Continued on page 14)

TO MEMORIZE OR NOT

Fred E. Luchs, First Congregation Church, Evanston, Illinois

. . . . . read in the Book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.
Neh. 8:8.

Should we preachers memorize th Sunday morning Scripture Lesso No, if we do it as a stunt to impre the people and to elicit complime tary remarks from the congregatio No, if we slavishly attempt to repr duce the exact wording and are ove conscious of words. No, if we hav prima donna aspirations.

After many years of experience, reply to this question with a vigo ously affirmative answer. My frien have given me all the reasons again memorization. They tell me that loo ing at the congregation instead of th Bible smacks of irreverence. What the reverent part of Holy Writ? Th paper? The costly binding? The in in which the words are framed? Do looking at the Book while reading induce reverence? Do the eyes glue to the book transpose the volume in a sacred article?

My friends tell me that memoriz tion is bad because preachers may n say the exact words in the book. there one exact rendition of every B ble passage? If the exact word is th standard in Scripture reading, the why do preachers read from diffe ent versions? Does the man who rea from the King James Version err b cause he does not use the words

(Continued on page 16)

Pulpit Preaching

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Published and printed monthly at Jackson, Miss., by the Tombigbee Publishing Co. Subscript Price: U. S. and Canada, $4.00 per year; other countries $4.50 per year: single copies $.50. Ent ed as second class matter at the Post Office at Jackson, Mississippi under the Act of March 3, 1

Address subscription orders to PULPIT PREACHING, Post Office Box 2088, Jackson, Mississi In Great Britain, address subscriptions to Religious Book Shop, 79 Reginald St., Luton B England.

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Words From The Cross

E SINNER JESUS COULD NOT SAVE

J. R. Brokhoff, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N. C.

One of the malefactors . . . railed on him saying, Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us.—Luke 23:29.

d you ever meet a person who rely wanted to go to hell? If you even the most hardened sinner n honest answer, he would not ne wanted to suffer eternally.

sus knew men as a whole do not to go to hell. For this sole pur- he came to earth. During this he taught, preached, suffered died to keep men from going to Many he was able to save from fate. We hear him say over and "Thy faith hath saved thee," or sins are forgiven thee," or "Sal- n hath come to this house." Yet id not succeed in all cases. One r Jesus could not save was the pentent thief on the cross. You mber there were two thieves fied with Jesus. One joined the in throwing insults at Jesus and "Art not thou the Christ? Save lf and us." His partner came to lefense of Jesus. He asked if he ot fear God since he also was . He claimed that while they de- d their verdict, Jesus had done ng wrong. Then he turned to Je- nd said with a childlike faith, l, remember me when thou com- o thy kingdom." Jesus replied, ay thou shalt be with me in lise."

ere is the contrast, representing ituation in the world. One is , the other is lost. Here is life, is death. One enters heaven, the goes to hell.

I

is scene puts the subject of salvation squarely before us. We are confronted with important questions which no man dare avoid. One is, will all men be ultimately saved? There are those who think so. They can see God at the end of the world looking into the faces of the doomed and having pity on them. They seem to think that God will weaken and say: "Ah, let's forget about it. Come with me to paradise. I can't bear to think of you suffering through eternity."

That is a sweet sentiment, but it does not conform to hard reality as taught by the Bible. Look again to Calvary: One was saved, one was lost. Jesus told a parable of ten virgins. Five were foolish, five were wise. Five went in, and five were left out of heaven. Jesus said, "Many are called but few are chosen." He described the way to destruction as broad and smooth with many on it; the way to heaven straight and narrow with few on it.

If the conclusion then is that not all will be saved, we can ask, if not, why not? Is it because God is vindictive? Can we see God turning his back on the forsaken because they refused to love him, disobeyed his commandments, and defied his will? Is it possible God could be a super-Shylock demanding his pound of flesh? No, this is not the picture of God given by Jesus. It is said that God does not desire the death of a sinner but that all might be saved.

Are some lost because God willed

it so? There are some who believe in predestination and election. They feel that God chose those to be saved and those to be lost. All of this is to the glory of God. The trouble with this view is that it forgets God's mercy. God would never condemn people to hell or choose people to suffer for his glory. Jesus taught otherwise. He said, "If any man will come after me . . ." Note the word, "any." It is all-inclusive. In John 3:16, it is said, "God so loved . . . that **whosoever** believeth on him should not perish . . ." Again, look at the word, "whosoever." It includes all. Moreover, Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I shall draw **all** men unto me." Not some men, but **all** men.

If this is true, then why are some men going to be in hell? If they are there it is obvious that it is not God's responsibility but man's. He fails to accept the way of salvation. If a man asks directions to Athens, and in spite of your directions takes the highway to Macon, who is responsible for his failure to arrive at Athens? You see, God will not violate man's free will. Never will he force love upon a man. To be saved, man must want to be saved.

To refuse God's gracious invitation to be saved means sending yourself to hell. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost. Jesus called this sin the unpardonable sin. It is unpardonable because the person refuses to come for pardon. It is not that God would not pardon, even the worst sin. Are there people today who are right now committing this sin? Indeed, there are far too many. These refuse to give in to every prompting of the Spirit. They refuse to go to church. Sunday School is for children. Prayer is unnecessary. Religion is for weak people. The Bible is all right if you have the time.

What shall we do about these people? Shall we say that they know about the church and therefore if they do not want to be saved, let them go to hell? Well, what do you think Jesus would say? He kept seeking, praying, and inviting men to come to him. Our responsibility lies in doing our part to convince men to accept the way of salvation. Is it likely the penitent thief would have entered paradise if he had not spoken to his companion in crime? He urged his friend to fear God and to see Jesus as the sinless Messiah. Then he turned to Jesus and asked for himself. His part was done. His reward was paradise. You and I must not let these unsaved go to hell. Their immortal souls are at stake. We must persist in praying and seeking them. And some day they may turn to Christ and enter paradise.

II

Another question about salvation is if people are once saved ,are they always saved? Some Christian groups would answer "yes." They think that once God has accepted you, you are always secure in his love. You are saved no matter what happens later.

This argument cannot stand against the teachings of the Bible. In the parable of the sower, Jesus tells about four kinds of people. They all received the seed, the Word of God. One kind is Christian but for a few weeks—the birds snatch the seed. Another kind is Christian for a few months or years—the seed falls on shallow ground. Often we see them as the years go by. They enter the church with great vigor and enthusiasm. They are going to turn the world upside down. But it soon wears off and they become inactive. A third kind is like seed that falls among weeds and thorns. It is choked. The weeds are the cares and pleasures of the world. These people lose their faith because they get too busy with other things. They are like Martha, so many things to do that there is no time to sit at the feet of Jesus with Mary. A fourth of the seed falls on good ground and produces fruit. This represents the faithful, the pillars of the church.

In today's church, the situation is this: people confess their sins, ac-

ist, are baptized or confirmed, and ome members of the church. Later lose the faith, but their names still on the rolls. What do we n by losing faith or how do we w they lost faith? Jesus said, "By r fruits ye shall know them." An tive member is one who does not e at least once during a year to Lord's Supper, who makes no fi- cial contribution, and who fails vorship.

Vhat shall we do with these inac- s who have lost their faith? Are also lost? You see, the tragedy he situation is that most of these tives think all is well with their ls, when it is not. We are saved by h. When we had that faith, we ed the church. Now these have their faith but have their names the rolls. It results in giving the tive a false security.

low many of these inactives real- their spiritual condition as well as ir standing in the church? We e agreed they are lost so long as stay away from the Father. Re- nber what the Prodigal's father when he came home, "This my was dead and is alive again, he lost and is found." For these in- ves salvation is in returning to the venly Home. Moreover, how many aware of their loss of standing in church? An inactive cannot stand a sponsor in infant baptism, be- se one without faith cannot con- faith for another. An inactive can- vote at congregational meetings. cannot be elected to the church ncil. When he dies, it is not the tom to bury inactives from the rch. A secular chapel at a funeral ne is proper. A difference is made at the committal. The faithful buried with the words: "Earth to h, ashes to ashes, dust to dust in and certain hope of the resurrec- through our Lord Jesus Christ ." But the words for the inactive "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, t to dust until the day our Lord is Christ shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Here there is no comfort or assurance for the mourners that the inactive is safe in the bosom of the Lord. We commit the soul of the inactive to the judgment of God.

What shall we do about these unsaved on our rolls? Shall we say that they know where the church is and their responsibility to it. If they do not want to come, that is their business. What is that to us? They know better. Again, ask if this is what Jesus would say and think? Would he not be like the father who keeps looking, hoping, and praying that his son will return from the city of sin? We need to do something practical about our inactives. The time to do it is Lent.

III

A third question to be raised about salvation is, does it matter how long one waits to be saved? Can one be saved in his dying hour? Some bitterly oppose the idea, for they say it is not fair. They think it is not right for a man to waste his life, and then at the last day repent and get the same blessing as one who was faithful all his life. What is the answer? It is to be found on Calvary's hill. The penitent thief was given paradise in his dying hour.

Why do some want to wait so long before accepting Christ? Some simply procrastinate. They keep putting it off. Others say they want to sow wild oats when they are young. They intend to settle down when they get past middle age and then reform. Others want to make a success first and build up financial security before accepting Christ. With Christ, they cannot feel free to use the devious and shady methods to attain the goal. When they reach it, they will repent.

What is wrong with this approach? The trouble is that you cannot tell when your final day is going to be. We are finding more and more people dying unexpectedly. Death comes while one sleeps. A heart attack

snuffs out life suddenly. No one knows the day of his death. It is dangerous to wait to accept Christ. You may die before you repent. And there is no repentance after death.

If one waits until the end of life to be a Christian, he is missing so much. It was reported recently that a man nad woman remarried after being divorced for 46 years. For 44 years they lived within two blocks of each other and did not speak a word. Finally they made up and were re-married. He was 69 and she was 67. At the end of their lives, they resumed married life. Now, what did these people miss all these 46 years? They missed the day by day and year after year happiness of married life. They missed having children and the joy of watching them grow. The same happens to a man if he waits until the end of life to believe. He misse a lifetime of joy in serving Christ. H misses growth in grace. He does n have time to let down roots of fai which will give him peace and pois Heaven begins when Christ is a cepted, and therefore life could b heaven on earth.

Yes, Jesus failed to save a sinne He failed because the sinner fir failed to repent and believe. Yo know, Jesus wanted to save that u repentent sinner on the cross. H must have looked over at him wit deep longing. He wanted to say, "Yo too may be with me in paradise But the thief refused to say he wa sorry for his sins. He would not as for mercy. He could have been save if only he would have said, "Pleas Lord."

THE WORD OF LOVE

Charles Francis Tame, Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church, Oakland, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Woman, behold thy son. . . . Behold thy mother.—John 19:25-27.

We are reminded by one clergyman that Jesus is unique because there is an accent in His speech that distinguishes Him from the rest of men. On the occasion when Jesus went to the temple and began His address by referring to the plot of the religious authorities to kill Him, the leaders sent officers to take Him. But the officers were greatly impressed by the Master, and they said, "No man ever spoke like this man," (John 7-46). They were saying that Jesus spoke with a divine accent.

Of a truth, we all speak with an accent and the accent of our speech reveals the region or country we come from, but Jesus' accent was not so much on words themselves as on the fact that He is God's Son and that He speaks the eternal word of God. Thus, when He speaks we cannot miss His accent on faith, or on the necessity for and power of prayer, or on the need for self-denial, or on the importance of love! We have placed the emph sis on lesser values and things of le ser importance. We have talked terms of creeds and dogmas, or wi the twang of denominationalism, with the accent of theologies or pr grams or organization and machine but our Lord always put first thin first and so He placed the acce where it belonged.

The words Jesus spoke while H hung on the cross had their peculi spiritual articulation. His first wo was a word of forgiveness. His seco was a word of promise, spoken in a swer to a prayer. His third word w a word of love, directed to a sp cific need and situation.

We may pause to reflect briefly the sorrow of heart that was undoul edly being experienced by Mary she stood by the cross of Jesus. Lo years before, when she and Jose had taken the Christ Child, as a ti baby, to the temple, Simeon had

d a prophetic word concerning Babe and His mother. With ref- ce to Mary he had said: "A sword l pierce through thy own soul." on this day of the crucifixion, sword" was indeed piercing her t.

is impossible to estimate sorrow grief. Mary had been prepared his in one sense, but in another e she had not. She could not have vn all that was involved — the s, its shame and reproach, its aw- suffering. And, undoubtedly her was heightened by confusion at terrible turn of events. And too, mother-love suffered even more this shattering of her hopes and extreme suffering of her Son, for erhood always suffers in such mstances.

it if we look carefully at this e and the words of our text, we see three things.

I

rst, we may consider the words en by Jesus as an expression of

ie love of Christ had expressed in many different ways. For ex- le, when four men brought their d who was sick of the palsy to , His love for the unfortunate ght about both the man's sal- n and his healing. When Christ at the tomb of Lazarus and in ritative tones called out into the damp and chasm of rock, "Laza- come forth!" He was giving ex- ion to the love that conquers death. And when He cured the who was bound by a demon and dered a lunatic, He was giving ssion to the love that can loosen etters that have men bound and et them free. When He came to o and found blind Bartimaeus e the highway begging, and the man cried out for mercy, and t healed him, He gave expres- o the love that can open closed and can cause those who are to see. When they brought the n taken in adultery to Him and He forgave her, He was expressing His love for fallen humanity and He was saying in effect, no matter how great the sin or how low one may fall, His love would surround them. And when He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," for those who had sent Him to the cross, and for those who had nailed Him there, He was expressing His love for His enemies. When He answered the prayer of the dying malefactor with those words, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise," He was expressing His love for those who turn to Him for mercy even in the eleventh hour. His love expresses itself in many ways and in many circumstances, and here, in our text, His love finds expression as it reveals itself to His mother.

II

But, consider further that we have here not only an expression, but an example of love. It is one thing to talk about how Christ expressed His love, but it is another to recognize that He has given us an example which we are to follow.

We may see this example of love when we recognize that there at the cross we see something of what someone has called "Love's Dilemma." In other words, how much does one owe to God, or to any right cause, which he can only serve by involving others close to him to their suffering, shame or other disadvantage? How much do we owe to human ties and how much do we owe to God?

It is never easy to solve this problem, but there is only one right choice! Love cannot maintain its integrity at the price of moral integrity, and lesser loyalties cease to be loyalties when they cut across the central loyalty to Christ.

But this example of love becomes more significant for us when we see here something of the Christian Way of meeting and facing up to sorrow. Our Lord was not without a deep sense of pity for those who sorrowed, but He knew that the healing of any

sorrow is in new relationships and in new responsibilities. As someone has said: "The broken bonds of affection can never be left loose and bleeding. They must be woven into new and healing patterns." It is always tragic when people do not realize this truth. So many come to their calvary when a loved-one is taken. Then, the bleeding bonds of affection remain, exposed to the cruelties of conflicting doubts and fears, and those exposed nerves of sorrow and heartache, if permitted to remain exposed, will well nigh rob that individual of his reason. They could, if they would, find the answer in Christ's way, by seeking to discover, under God, new relationships and new responsibilities. Just so, Mary became John's mother and John became Mary's son. John was given her charge and she was given John's charge.

But this example of love becomes even more meaningful when we come to see something of the life-changing experiences that may be found at the cross through obedience to the commands of Christ. Here was a new experience for each of these who stood or knelt close to the cross. It was to be a life-changing experience for both Mary and John. But it was only an earnest of the new experience awaiting those who would henceforth make the cross the altar of their lives.

We may hear the word of Christ to us if we will draw close enough to the cross. Very often we do not hear because we will not go to calvary, the calvary of surrender of pride, the calvary of death to self, the calvary of release from sin, the calvary of sacrifice and self-denying service. Be mindful that only as we make the cross central in our lives can we hear Him speak and thus, through obedience to Him, find thos life-changing experiences He intend we shall have.

III

But, while we see here an expres sion of love and an example of lov we see also an enablement to lov There is little or no use in provic ing us with an example when w lack the ability, the strength, th wherewithal to follow it. It woul cease to be an example and would be come only a lofty, unattainable idea But our Lord, on the same cross fro which He spoke these significar words, provided us with the powe the enablement, the wherewithal t make the following of His exampl possible, in some small measure a least. So it is that we speak of th power of the Gospel. So it is that w can talk about the life-changing ex periences wrought by the cross. So is that we can be filled with Christ love and be possessed of some of H power. Because that cross is not death — it is a life, a new and eve lasting life. There is power and en ablement. From that cross and th subsequent resurrection we receiv "power to become the sons of God

We need not fall short in any these matters, whether it is a matt of working out our sorrows, or a ma ter of choices that affect those w love, or whether it is a matter walking in obedience to Christ's com mand. In any and all things there power sufficient to enable us to fo low Christ's example. We close on th note of joy that is permissible, f as Leslie Weatherhead has remind us: " . . . in three days sorrow w turn to joy and this dark night w be followed by a dawn that will la forever!"

"I THIRST"

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Few of us in America have ever been thirsty. We "have it so good" that we hardly comprehend the meaning of the word. The turning of faucet in a comfortable kitchen very different from carrying wa

es across a desert in a bag made animal skin. On the hot barren ds of Palestine foot and donkey relers knew thirst. So when, as e closed in upon him and pain took toll, Jesus said, "I thirst," men erstood him.

I

he fifth word reveals the reality physical needs. And if we under- d the fourth word, "My God, ?" as being an introduction to the m of faith, this is the first word esus' own behalf. It is the only d concerning his own need. Je- sought and possessed a faith big- than the circumstances of life. he, like the rest of us, was given in an earthen vessel, and our hen vessels must depend on sus- nce. The needs of our bodies are

Jesus' day physical needs had a rity. As he began his ministry his temptation voiced the basic need h men felt. "If you are the son God, grant that these stones be- e bread." This they imposed to his godliness. The Divine could nothing greater than that there lenty of bread. Jesus answered, n does not live by bread alone." in the twentieth century with our piles of food, and our great gers unmet, we have learned this t this is not to say that bread is sential. Jesus taught men to pray g, "Give us this day bread." n needed, the gifts of bread and r are services worthy of the an- A religion which seeks to save s souls while remaining indiffer- o their physical needs is unwor- f the name of Christ. "Come, O ed of my Father, inherit the king- prepared for you. . . for I was ry and you gave me meat; I was y and you gave me drink." Thirst ver an inconsequential matter. resence poses a God inspired re- ibility.

II

e fifth word, too, points up a contrast of which there are many in the New Testament. Jesus introduced the conversation with the woman at the well by asking for a drink. Then he said, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst." Not long after this visit, he said to those who sought his counsel, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." But from the cross he said, "I thirst."

Concerning this contrast we acknowledge that life's thirst is deeper than for water. Man's hunger is deeper than his hunger for bread. That we know now. Our basic needs can be met and security found only in right relationships and in properly ordered values. When these are found bodily needs are secondary.

But this contrast also reveals that Jesus could do for the Samaritan woman and for others what he could not do for himself. Some mocked him saying, "If you are the son of God, save yourself." The priests laughed and jeered as they shouted, "He saved others, himself he cannot save!" Again we see the limited orbit in which men's minds moved. The only test they knew centered in the saving of one's self. That was proof. If a man could not save himself he had no claim to lordship. "If he be the Christ, let him come down from the cross."

The new dimension which Jesus brought to life was that of giving. For him giving included everything, even life. Those who offered hostility had yet to understand the meaning of a life given. There is still a void in our thinking here. "What does Dr. Schweitzer profit by a life in Africa?" one asks. "If Dr. John Ross is so capable, why doesn't he come home where what he does will do some good?" Such attitudes are like those who said, "If you are the son of God, save yourself." If one cannot save himself and others, what is the choice? To insure the river of life for others, Jesus

passed through "a dry and thirsty land."

III

There is another truth revealed more by the order of the fifth word than by its content. This week I learned of a Jewish rabbi, now ministering in Southern California, who has spent much of his life in England and South Africa. His judgment is: "Too much of religion in America is social and superficial. It does not go down to the depth where change is essential." Such is a keen observation and an indictment. But if we will understand the order of the words from the cross we will discover the blueprint for a religion of revolutionary character.

The focal point of our values is self. We rationalize saying, "I must look out for myself." Then we say the same about our families and close friends. After our kind are provided for we express nominal concern for those who are different. And finally we begrudgingly share a bit of surplus with those in faraway places making sure that not one ounce of it reaches our enemies.

Our order of concern begins with self and moves out, to stop short of our enemies. Note the order of Jesus' concern as expressed from the cross. His first word? It was in behalf of his enemies. And these were not straw men like we conjure up to rationalize out of Christian commitment. These were real enemies. They had arrested him, they had beaten him, they had lied about him. Now they had nailed him to a cross. We do not have real enemies—ours are make-believe. But we turn from the Christian obligation of love saying, "What if our enemies became real? Then shouldn't we be prepared to hate and destroy?" Jesus' enemies were very real and his first concern from the cross was for them. He had counseled, "Do good to them that hate you." Now he prayed first for his destroyers, "Father, forgive them."

The second word concerned the criminal. "Today you shall be w
me." Always his heart was with t
lost and the least. "Inasmuch as
have done it unto one of these lea
ye have done it unto me." So, hi
on his priority list, next to enem
were the criminals. And then, havi
taken time, he gave his attention
family and friends. "Behold your s
Behold your mother." His prayers,
efforts, his energy had been direct
first to his enemies, then to the m
fits, then to family and friends, a
finally, as though last and least,
thirst."

Who ponders the order of the
words will find in them not a sup
ficial, social religion but rather a n
set of values that would, if practic
turn our world upside-down. Is
first responsibility to save ourselves
our enemies? The judgments of G
may bring strange reversals to
judgments of men. "Woe to yo
said Amos, "who desire the day
the Lord." Do we really mean "T
kingdom come," as long as we are
willing to accept its values? "The f
shall be last and the last first."

IV

A further insight from the word
thirst" often goes unnoticed. Near
cross was a bowl of vinegar. App
ently such was a regular prop, u
to bring a bit of merciful refreshm
to the parched lips of a dying m
This is amazing! Death on the c
had been carefully designed to
flict the greatest possible torture
on the victim. Why, then, the w
of mercy? In response to his
someone lifted a vinegar soa
sponge to the lip sof Jesus. Luke
dicates that this was done in mock
but the other gospels treat it as
act of mercy.

How out of place, how strang
this setting, was this little act of k
ness! But men cannot forever th
decency. Deep down in man's na
is an instinct toward goodness. It
not be forever subdued.

In this awful event hate was
bed of a complete victory. Kind

ke out! Here is an indication of a lity that is natural to man. There ithin us the impulse to help. We endowed with an urge toward lness and mercy. This is human ire and uncontrolable.

ivilization seeks to put us into ds and sometimes bids us wear it jackets. We move then as mem- of a social unit, labor or man- ment, dark or pale, and sometimes n army spurred by propaganda de- ed to incite fear. But in spite of strait jackets, men's natural quali- break through! Fraternity is ex- ssed across drawn lines—someone ot control a kindness toward the my; ill-will never has the day en- y to itself.

/e excuse our unkind deeds and y words because of our human ire. "What do you expect," one , "I am only human." We falsely k that "only human" means we not of God, but "only human" ns we have risen above the beast. is revealed the quality that be- gs to human nature. And long be- the Psalmist said, "What is man thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Thou hast made him a little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor." And because man is made like God, he is meant for the role of the angel.

Jesus said, "I thirst." "So they put a sponge of vinegar to his mouth." Soldiers, hired to be crucifiers, could not be crucifiers only. Their human nature showed through. What if the strait jackets of fear and hate so carefully molded by propaganda could be removed from our lives until we were free to express the love and mercy with which we are endowed?

Jesus' word "I thirst" was the last on his list of concerns. When we see life through his eyes, a reversal of values will take place. His physical need was real. Man does not live by bread alone, but men, all men, are dependent upon bread and water. And to give drink to the thirsty is to express the true nature of our beings. Having seen this life pass through "a dry and thirsty land" saving others instead of himself, we can no longer be at ease.

E GREATEST VICTORY

min C. Oldsen, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Ohio

It is finished.—John 19:30

here's an interesting old legend ut Zaccheus, the little man who bed a tree that he might have a er look at Christ and whom Christ ored with a visit in his home. Ac- ling to the story, Zaccheus rose y every morning and mysterious- vent away carrying a pail. His nge behavior puzzled his wife. morning she quietly followed and erved him as he stopped at the n well, filled his pail with fresh er and carried it to a sycamore outside the city. Carefully he red away all the rubbish that had n thrown under the tree the day re and all the little branches that fallen during the night. Pouring the water near the base of the tree, he tenderly placed his hand against its trunk, and stood silently in happy meditation. His wife now came forth and asked what might be the meaning of it all. Zaccheus responded enthusiastically, "This is the tree where I found Christ."

It is my fondest wish and most fervent prayer that many may find Christ, or having found Him, may be strengthened in their faith. Roualt, a distinguished French artist, once exclaimed in a burst of religious fervor, "My only ambition is to be able some day to paint a Christ so moving that those who see Him will be converted." Every Christian minister

worthy of his high calling is above all else concerned with preaching in such a manner that those who listen may see Christ and accept Him as their Savior. In the story we have before us we have an unusual opportunity.

Martensen Larsen wrote that in imagination he sometimes pictured God to himself as sitting before a great Bible. The Bible page had wide margins so that God could record next to each verse the names of those who had come to faith while pondering it. In some places there were so many names, there was scarcely room for them. One of the verses that had the most names written beside it was our text from John 19:30. It is Christ's sixth word from the cross, "It is finished."

I

Let us return to Calvary where the central purpose of Christ's life and its holy motivation stand most clearly revealed. The story of how Christ's life on earth came to an end is a sad story, a story of deep tragedy. It tells of the frightful consequences of sin; it tells of betrayal, denial and disloyalty on the part of the disciples; it tells of murderous hatred and envy on the part of the religious leaders; it tells of bigotry and unscrupulous tactics on the part of the church; it tells of disgraceful injustice and cowardice on the part of the government; it tells of revolting cruelty on the part of society; it tells of fearful suffering and shameful dying on the part of an innocent Man, the best Man who ever lived on earth. But the story of the end of Christ's life is above all the story of triumph and victory! To that we have now come.

Solemn stillness reigns on Calvary. The noonday darkness has ended and the shadows of the crosses are lengthening and stretching away from Jerusalem. The people who are still standing around have been sobered into the recognition that they have witnesses something strange and awful. Some have gone home, beating their breasts in remorse and conf sion. Christ has just experienced kindness. His request for a drink h been answered with a wet spon pressed to His lips. At that mome tragedy and defeat suddenly are fo gotten. The cry of triumph and vi tory is heard. There rings out ov Calvary — over the world — over time — the gloriously thrilling wo from the lips of the dying Savior, is finished." "Finished is Christ's ho life, and with His life His sufferin and with His suffering His work, a with His work the redemption of t world." In the original Greek te also this sixth statement of Chr from the cross is but one word, t grandest word that has ever be spoken! It announces the eternal s vation of the world.

"It is finished." Christ's life is co ing to an end but this is not a cry resignation. For about thirty-thr long and eventful years He has liv among men. His earthly life is dra ing to a close, but in spirit He w be with them always. He can lo back over that holy life without tinge of regret. It has been a life giving rather than of getting; of ma ing others happy rather than of se ish pleasures. It has been the mo dedicated and purposeful life of time. Its end has in it all the elemen that make our funerals sad: He is st young, He is leaving dependen there are many who love Him dear He is leaving when His friends a the world still need Him, worst of He is dying in shame and ignomin Yet when He says, "It is finishe there is triumph in His voice.

II

Some have felt that this sixth wo of Christ is an expression of rel from long and intense suffering. It true, the suffering is almost ov Christ has heard the last cutting jil the throbbing is dull and recedin the last drop of his blood has fall and never again will He experien human suffering in His own body, though He will always be most sy

hetic to it. Have you seen the fas-ating picture of Christ coming vn to earth as a human that indi-es also what His life was to be? he center of the picture an angel enderly carrying the Christ-child vn in its arms, the heavenly hosts nd about are singing, playing ps, and waving palm branches. It picture of heavenly splendor. But t is not all. In the distance two an-s are following the happy proces-. One does not at first notice them. y too are carrying something. One a small cross, the other a small vn of thorns. In Christ's life that ss was to grow larger and larger l His body was forced to fit it. ist Himself referred to it as a at cup of suffering which He had drink. In the Garden of Gethsem-He prayed, "Father, permit this to pass from me, nevertheless not will but Thine be done." On the s He has drained it to the last er drop. It is empty. He puts it e with a victorious, "It is fin-d."

hrist's work is finished. There is e joy in life to match that which experience in the satisfaction of ing completed a task, and the e difficult and prolonged the task, greater joy and satisfaction in hav-performed it. If you have succes-written a book, or performed an ration, or baked a cake, or built a e, or completed a heavy home-k assignment, or fattened cattle market, or concluded a business saction, you will know what it is e able to say, "It is finished." One ne most impressive characteristics he life of Christ is to be found in fact that He had one supreme pur-in living and He never lost sight . He was faithful to that purpose only when the crowds were fol-ng Him and when the multitudes e cheering Him, but also when yone seemed to have turned nst Him and He had to die on cross.

Ve remember His surprising re-mark to His mother, when she found Him, her twelve-year-old Boy, in the temple with the learned religious leaders, "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" In the fields and on the hillsides near Nazareth, on the Sea of Galilee and in the temple at Jerusalem, in the beauty of the mountain and on ugly Golgotha His Father's business inspired Him and determined everything He said and did. He told His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." At another time He stated, "The father hath not left Me alone; but I do always those things that please Him." In the closing hours of His life, shortly before His crucifixion, He could pray to His Father in heaven and say, "I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Just before He dies He calls out in triumph, "It is finished."

III

Men sometimes plan their lives and set goals which they hope to achieve. God may write across all their plans the one word, "Canceled." Those who start out in life with high ambitions may find that they must considerably trim their sails and reduce their plans. They may lose interest and forget about their once-high aspirations. They may actually accomplish that which they had planned to do in a lifetime. But the very best of them has never achieved a life's purpose that can be compared to the work of Christ, and none has ever fulfilled his purpose so perfectly. That is why Christ can face the end calmly and confidently. He is dying young, in pain, and in seeming disgrace, but He has gloriously fulfilled the work God gave Him to do and He can announce His triumph in a great call of victory, "It is finished." No one else will have to take up His life's work and put the finishing touches to it. It is completed. It is finished.

What was the great work Christ has brought to a successful conclu-

sion? The purpose of Christ's life was not merely to teach men the truth about God, conspicuous and wonderful as that purpose was. The purpose of Christ's life was not merely to give men the example of a perfect life, splendid as that purpose was. It was the all-pervading purpose of Christ's life to redeem all men from their sins, that they might again be children of God and heirs of heaven. Popular Christianity of our day is inclined to lose sight of that or deliberately to ignore it. Christ came not to save a civilization, or a way of life, or a governmental system, or a standard of living — He came to save men, not from the hardships of life, but for the joys of heaven. You can't carefully read your New Testament without becoming convinced of that. You can't believe what Christ has to say without accepting that. It may all sound terribly old-fashioned to you. Well, it's as old-fashioned as the promise of a Savior from sin made to the first human pair in the beginning of time. It's as old-fashioned as the announcement of the angel concerning the Christ-child, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin." Maybe it sounds like theology to you. It is, but it's blessed truth. Maybe it sounds like medieval religion to you. It's older than that; remember it is the religion revealed in the Word of God.

It's all quite simple. To man God said, "Here is the law. Live according to it perfectly and you shall live forever. Violate it and you shall be eternally dead, forever shut off from God." Men violate the law of God. Every man does; for no man can keep God's law perfectly. The justice of God is absolute and His love beyond understanding. So Christ perfectly fulfilled the law for all of us, for each of us. What about the punishment that we deserve for our wrongdoing? On the cross Christ suffered the terrors of hell and the pains of death for all of us, for each of us. The perfect righteousness of Christ and deliverance from the punishment of sin are now ours by faith in the Savior.

The famous evangelist Gypsy Smith used to tell the true story about a brave young gypsy who tried to save the life of his mother but she would not let him. As a caravan of gypsies was crossing a large river the bridge gave way and they all were plunged into the water. A young gypsy on horseback found his mother in the drowning crowd. But as he sought to save her, she struggled hysterically and he was unable to bring her to safety. At the mass burial the young gypsy was heard to sob over and over, "I tried to save you, Mother, but you would not let me."

When Christ uttered His great triumphant cry on Calvary, "It is finished," He was telling the world that the greatest victory of all time had been achieved. He was telling you that eternal salvation is now yours. You need but accept it. You need but take Christ as your Savior and follow Him. Christ wept over the city of Jerusalem because its people, His people, whom he had tried to save wouldn't let Him. Let Christ not say to you on judgment day, "I wanted to save you, but you wouldn't let Me." Accept Him now!

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING . . . Continued from page 2

final chapter, "Learning How to Live at Our Best," seems to this reviewer to be particularly inspiring. (Harper & Brothers, 215 pp., $3.75)

With the publication of **Melanchthon, The Quiet Reformer,** by Clyde Manschreck of Duke University, an important and hitherto substantially neglected figure of the Reformation comes into a clear and positive focus. Pastors who enjoy history, those who are curious concerning the story of the church, and those who find enjoyment and profit in biography will enthusiastically read and re-read this volume. Written upon the basis of

aausting research and told in a pic-ial and often dramatic fashion, this ok meets the finest standards of olarship and reader-appeal. The hor successfully identifies Melanch-n to the great forces which repre-t his era and with those men whose nes he helped to magnify. (Abing-n Press, 350 pp., $6.)

Jesus Compared by Charles S. Bra-n of Northwestern University, ws those areas of contrast between us and the founders and innova-s of other religions: Buddha, Krish-Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Zoroaster, ses, Mohammed, among others. In ilarities, the differences, and the sequent appraisals by disciples be-en Jesus and another spiritual der. The book, though written by ordained Christian clergyman, pre-ts fairly and sympathetically the n-Christian personalities which ve shaped the spiritual heritage of manity. (Prentice-Hall, 230 pp., 35)

n **The Gospel According to Jesus,** d Hightower tries to distinguish the id of Christ from all of the things d concerning him, to find the es-ce or kernel of Jesus' teaching. The ue of the book—and the reading ewarding—does not lie in the au-r's finding substance which others e missed, but in the matter of em-sis he gives to the cardinal teach-s concerning subjects such as God, n, sin, the new birth, love, society d death. The author writes in an piring, stimulating manner which sents Jesus in warm, personal and suasive terms, and not as an ab-ction. (Fleming H. Revell, 160 , $2.50)

ove and Justice is a selection of shorter writings of Reinhold Nie-ir, edited by D. B. Robertson. t I presents several essays on the e themes and later divisions of the k relate to love and justice to na-al and international levels with centration in the political, eco-nic, racial, and war and peace as. Dr. Niebuhr's thought is often provocative and challenging, sometimes astringent and austere, but always discerning. Many of the sixty-four selections are from periodicals and some are too dated to be directly relevant. (Westminster Press, 309 pp., $6.)

The Gospel from the Mount by John Wick Bowman and Roland W. Tapp adds substantially to the literature on Matthew 5-7. The book is an introduction to and a commentary of the Sermon on the Mount, and includes Bowman's paraphrase of the Gospel record. The theme of the Sermon is that of sin and its remedy, and here Jesus taught the nature of the Kingdom and the bases for citizenship. The book examines both the form Jesus employed and the content he gave to the Sermon. (Westminster Press, 189 pp., $3.75)

Now Then is a collection of eighty-six one-page parables for the present day, written by David E. Mason, a Louisiana Baptist pastor. The parables are clever, pertinent, colorful, and they will be useful as children's sermons and as homiletic illustrations. The author's narrative skill is refreshing and delightful. Some of the parable titles are: Read the Label, Bird-inthehanditis, Doughnut Hole, One-legged Stool, and What's Your Perspective? (Broadman Press, 86 pp., $1.75)

John Knox, who is one of the primary religious thinkers of our time, has added to his imposing list of books a new title which may well become his most widely-read volume. **The Death of Christ** relates to the cross in New Testament history and faith. The book deals with the historical circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion and of the meaning of the cross to the early church. The major emphasis of the book, however, is found in a brilliant and penetrating examination of Jesus' own understanding of his death. This is perhaps the year's best book for Lenten study. (Abingdon Press, 190 pp., $2.75)

TO MEMORIZE OR NOT . . .

(Continued from page 2)

the Revised Standard Version, or vice versa? (Jesus had a few things to say about "Pharisees" who worshipped words.) Our many translations indicate that we probably never get the perfect translation. Of course, if in memorization preachers use words foreign to the basic truth of the passage,—well, forget memorization.

Why memorize scripture? First, to prove to the congregation that preachers do revere Scripture. Memorization tells the people that ministers value the Book highly. People memorize that which means a great deal to them. We revere the passage enough to spend many hours pouring over it. The Lesson was not prepared five minutes before the service began.

Again, preachers memorize so that they may use their eyes more effectively. The most expressive part of our body is the eye. We portray truth through it. Our eyes speak of passion, joy, frustration, and of hope, love and mercy. When the layman reads his Bible privately, he may not perceive the truth of Holy Writ. He lacks knowledge. The preacher's acquaintance with Biblical mysteries must become theirs. Ministers cannot, in the Lesson, stop to explain its truths. The worshipper, by following our facial expression — especially the eyes — grasps truth and fact. Where preachers' lips are mute, the eyes reveal the mystery. If the preacher's eyes are fastened to the Bible during the reading and the people cannot see them, preachers lose a valuable auxiliary.

In **Basic Principles of Speech** by Sarett and Foster you read, these words: "A speaker is physically communicative when his eyes look directly into the eyes of individuals in his audience; especially when this line of communication is drawn as taut as a steel wire . . . A speaker reveals himself, partly by his muscle-movements. He simultaneously gives two addresses; one which the audience hears; the other which it sees. Eyes perceive meanings more quickly an accurately than ears . . . Covert mov ments in the face, especially aroun the mouth and the eyes, reveal th speaker's mood and personal chara teristics."

If a minister can forget the pap on which the Truth is written, th ink in which the words are frame and concentrate on the Truth whic The Book portrays, he can more e fectively portray that truth fo the congregations' understandin Through memorization, he can let h mind dwell on the Truth and the with bodily and vocal action ca bring to bear upon that Truth all th meanings therein. Thus the ministe interprets the Lesson not only wit his vocal chords but with the tot personality mechanism his Creato gave him.

What is the purpose of the Scrip ture Lesson? Do parsons read it ju because tradition demands it? Or i order to satisfy the whims of certai people? No. They read it to com municate and to get spiritual trut across the lectern. Memorization help them to transmit truth to their peo ple more effectively because they ca see their facial expressions. The whol body with its powerful emotion help to send the scriptural message int the pews.

Again, memorization requires tim Ministers will spend hours on the Le son. They will compare the version They will mull over the various in terpretations. Such labor brings fresh ness and vitality to the Readin Readers can picture the Truth mor effectively because they know th facts. Nuggets are hidden in "ther thar" verses, and if they spend muc time mulling over them, truths whic before were hidden, now are ther Through memorization of the Le son's truth gets inside the reader Five minutes preparation will not d this.

When you watch a TV show, g to the theatre, or attend a movie, d you want the actors to use a scrip

you want them to carry a book they move across the stage? You h they would leave the script at ne because acting without it cre- s the illusion that what you see is l. When you hear the Lesson, you nt to feel the same reality.

Dr. Donald Wheeler who has turn- out thousands of excellent Bible ders, shares with his students the y of the Bishop of London going Edwin Booth, the great actor, and ing. "Mr. Booth, how can you fill r theatre eight times a week while ave scant crowd once a week?" l Mr. Booth answered: "Bishop, because you take the truth and make it sound like fiction, but I take fiction and make it sound like the truth."

Memorizing the Lesson — if done well — will make truth sound like truth. Ministers will continue to memorize the Lesson, and may do it badly. Ministers may not memorize and read well. To memorize or not to memorize, ought to be determined by the method which fulfills the text: " . . . read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

Why not memorize next Sunday's Lesson and then check results?

ORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, The Federated Churches, Lewiston, Idaho

uestions in the Passion Story . . . at those of Judas: Why was the ment wasted? How much will you e me? Is it I? The questions to as: Do you betray the Son of Man a Kiss? and: What is that to us? low men in the Passion Story are ed in the acid of their questions! as: "Are you the Son of God?" Pi- : "Are you the King of the Jew? Don't you know I have the power ree you? . . . What is truth? (He 't stop for an answer.) What evil he done? Will you have him or abas?" The malefactors: "Are you the King? Save us and yourself!" "Have you no respect for God now?" Jesus's last question: y hast Thou forsaken me?" Ques- s of the resurrection stories. Why ye the living among the dead? nan, why do you weep?—Robert Eddy in **Question-marks in the Bi-**

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fter looking the New Testament tions over, and thinking too of questions of the Old Testament, I d what I considered the most vital tions. These turned out to be nine umber, and encompass the whole an's reasoning life on earth, his t for survival, for meaning, for love, in life, and in the hereafter. They are a way of summing up all we work for and with . . . I submit them:

Will God dwell on the earth? (Solomon's question at the dedication of the temple.)

What is man (that Thou are mindful of him)?

If a man die, will he live again?

What is truth?

What does the Lord require of you?

What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

What have I to do with Thee, O Christ?

What will you have me to do for you?

Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?

As the heroes of old died without the promise, God having ordained that they without us should not be made perfect, so it is given us to strive to answer their questions, or at least to ask them again. But first, what were those questions, and what did they seek?—Robert L. Eddy.

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God warms his hands at man's heart when he prays.—John Masefield.

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Bishop Arthur Moore has said that

in every man's heart are a cross and a throne. "If he puts himself on the throne, he will put Jesus on the cross. If he puts himself on the cross, he will put Christ on the throne. With self on the throne, the immediate willful self will destroy the ultimate self. But if he puts Christ on the throne, Christ will raise the ultimate self to new glory, beauty, and power."

* * *

If Jesus bore the cross, and died on it for me, ought I not to be willing to take it up for Him.—D. L. Moody.

* * *

Folks used to pity that little girl the Browns adopted years ago, because they couldn't afford a car and she didn't get to go many places. Now grown, she finally told us how she always felt about it. "Didn't take me anywhere?" she exclaimed, "Why, my folks took me into their hearts!"

—Burton Hillis

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Philip T. Hartung in reviewing the movie, "The Bachelor Party," says the saddest of all is the final shot of the perennial bachelor Warden. "What's there to go home for? I've read all the papers." And he sits at one end of a long bar starting a conversation with a frowsy woman at the other end.

* * *

True education makes for inequality of individuality, the inequality of success, the glorious inequality of talent, of genius; for inequality, not mediocrity, individual superiority, not standardization, is the measure of the progress of the world.

—Felix E. Schelling.

* * *

Easter is not "the end" but simply the major signpost on a long road.

* * *

The message of the church is a message that offers death whenever it offers life, for the kind of life it offers can only come through death. When the church overlooks the nature of eternal life and invites men to a life of ease and compromise, when it overlooks the significance o a redemptive fellowship and invite to a fellowship of self-centered activ ity, when it overlooks the mutual de pendence of worship and brotherhoo and invites to worship that is d vorced from service — then th church is in reality inviting to deat and not to life.—Rachel Henderlite i **A Call to Faith.**

* * *

It makes all the difference in th world to me to know and believe tha Jesus is alive, and that the Kingdo of God for which he gave his life alive and powerful and true and rea and it means that the only way yo or I will ever find our lives is by th way of that Kingdom, by way of tha Cross, and by the price of that lov There is no other way, and that why our hearts are filled with grat tude on Easter Day as we try to pu into words what is really beyond th range of words: that Jesus, thoug not in a physical presence, though no visible, though not here among u now as one we can see, neverthele lives and reigns forever, and that h spirit can be in us and that we ca be in him. — Theodore P. Ferris **The Story of Jesus.**

* * *

As the Easter season approache let us look carefully at the men wh have accepted responsibility in spi of all odds against them for the goo things of the world. When Chr said, "Love your enemies, do good them that hate you, and pray f them who despitefully use you," meant it. To demonstrate his sincer ity and to prove the effectiveness this doctrine He had to pray for th small group that conspired to eli inate Him. He did pray for them ev while He was on the cross. If he h backed out at the last minute cursed those who opposed Him, His spiritual teachings would ha been invalidated and His divine n ture would have evaporated. — All E. Claxton in **Your Cross.**

This was the beautiful tool that
d devised so that flesh might obey
at intellect willed. What were we
hout this Hand? — this odd-shaped,
e-pronged member, capable of
zing, striking, stroking, able to be
ndled into a fist that broke noses,
d as a hammer, precise as a
nter, eloquent as a lyre, useful for
ging, prodding, exploring, instru-
nt of love, prober of clocks, clasper
sword handles and maces, pincher
lay, puller of church bells, scratch-
of bald heads, picker of fleas,
ker of Davids.—Sidney Alexander
Michaelangelo the Florentine.

* * *

I beseech you!" God pleads, when
could command. "O Jerusalem!"
trange way for the Creator to deal
h the created.

God usually whispers; sometimes
has to shout. It is dangerous to ig-
e God's whisper, forcing him to
ut. He whispers through the love
Christ; he shouts in the screaming
the bombs we drop upon each
er.

God's deepest call comes not by
r, but by his mercies. The fear of
Lord may be the beginning of
dom, but the love of God is its
fillment. The Prodigal Son was
wn back to his father and back
life, not by fear, but by love.

God has not dealt with us accord-
to our desserts. Each has re-
ved more than he has a right to
nand. Pierce Harris warns us, "If
d is not as near as he once was,
n't make the mistake of thinking
t it was God who moved."—**The**
w Christian Advocate.

* * *

Father Fouculd, priest to Taureg
esmen in North Africa, had been
t. I am impressed by what hap-
ed after his martyrdom; for it has
nething to do with Eastertide Com-
nion. Killed in his hermitage . . .
took the French military three
ks to get to the scene . . . the
tain who came wanted to gather
the few belongings the priest
owned . . . about to leave, the officer noticed a tiny monstrance half hidden in the sand. It contained the holy wafer, consecrated to become, as Catholics teach, the actual body of Christ. Unable to make up his mind, what to do, the captain took the container back to the fort. "I was very embarrassed not to know what to do with Almighty God," he said. Protestants have different ideas about the sacrament, but as Communion most of us are puzzled about what to do with Almighty God. How far shall we let him into our lives? Shall we open the door wide, or only a crack?

—T. Otto Nall.

* * *

Someone has written of Thomas that he "only wanted to **know** that he knew." The inference is that if this is sin, then it is usable sin. Thomas was an asset to the little band. Suppose the man from Nazareth had not been the Son of God, but only another of many who appeared alleging themselves to be the Messiah. Only Thomas's skepticism would have provided the check rein of reason on the capricious emotions of such as Peter and Simon the Zealot. The fact that Jesus was indeed the Christ is not altered by the fact that Thomas was not quite sure. Nor did the apostle's faith suffer from his doubts. Rather it was strengthened and deepened when the ultimate truth cancelled out the questions . . . It took courage to be skeptical — it always does — and a deep kind of honesty that is at once intellectual and spiritual.—Leonidas Contos.

* * *

Some years ago the salvage ship "Artiglio" was working over the sunken ship "Egypt." Object: gold. As the seekers cleared away debris and mud from the bullion room, a strange object came to light. It looked like part of an old book. Washed and dried topside, a printed page appeared. Those who read English know that it was a part of the Bible, the story of David and Jonathan. They had

sought treasure, and their first discovery was a fragment of the Book of God. Men think the Bible has outlived its usefulness, but, searching for treasure by which to live, they uncover the Bible amid the debris sunk by planetary storms and rediscover its worth.—David A. MacLennan in **"Resources for Sermon Preparation.**

* * *

There are men and women who feel that the most effective way, the only permanent way, to bring the Christian gospel to life is to put it to work in one's own life in the most complete way possible.

These persons share the conviction of Meister Eckhart, a 14th century mystic, that "People should think less about what they ought to do, and more about what they ought to be." —Norman S. Ream in **Bringing the Gospel to Life.**

* * *

When properly focused, a lens assembles enough of the sun's rays to start a fire. A well-focused life may be of almost unlimited usefulness.

—Christian Economics.

* * *

We defend religion too much. Vital religion, like good music, needs no defense but rendition. A wrangling controversy in support of religion is precisely as if members of an orchestra should beat folks over the head with their violins to prove that music is beautiful. But such procedure is no way to prove that music is beautiful. Play it!—Harry Emerson Fosdick.

* * *

One of Kin Hubbard's remarks was, "The feller that puts off marryin' till he can support a wife ain't very much in love." The same might be said of the person who puts off giving time, talents, and possessions to the church until he has enough and to spare.

* * *

A non-believing white explorer in Africa was shown a copy of a Bible by a native trying to demonstrate how advanced his tribe was. "We've outgrown that sort of thing," said th white man. Replied the native, "It a good thing we've not outgrown i otherwise you would have been meal as soon as we saw you."

—Ralph Vinson.

* * *

Wesley was once asked how he g the crowds. He replied, "I set myse on fire, and the people come to se me burn."—H. E. Armacost.

* * *

Somehow . . . we have lost Jesu We have so sentimentalized and mi understood Him that it is likely H would never be recognized were H to walk our streets and speak to ou problems.—Charles Templeton.

* * *

The Christian faith draws i strength and sanction for meeting th tragic in life from the cross of Jesu Christ. It is the cross that gives Chri tianity an undeniable point of co tace with every tragic fact or mea ing, yet by the same token our fait is radically distinguished from an view of life that is only tragic.

—Roger Hazelton.

* * *

The church's purpose is to be th community of redemption and to e tend its boundaries to include all ma kind.

* * *

When Fulton J. Sheen learned th he would be on the air at the sam time as Groucho Marx, he wasn fazed a bit, but quipped to his a dience: "Now you have a choi whether you want to Bet Your Li or Better Your Life."

* * *

Our problem in every area is th of a vantage point for vision — a v sion that can illumine the years ar the centuries just ahead. We are co ditioned to be intellectually nea sighted. We are skeptical of ter like "value" and "faith" and "visio we are more interested in seei through things than in seeing beyo them.—Liston Pope.

E SHEPHERD'S PSALM

Frank A. Court, St. Paul Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

, when John Bunyan from Bed- jail was writing the memorable , "Pilgrim's Progress," he believed man was in a desperate struggle stain his soul, what would he say y? In that unforgettable story the rim meets many foes that would roy his soul, despondency, de- r, indifference and ease. On his ney he meets the foul friend, llyon, who, straddled over the dth of the way, said, "Prepare elf to die; for I swear by my in- al den that thou shalt go no fur- ; here will I spill thy soul."

he soul-spilling forces are legion y, so it is worth while to go back ss the centuries and meditate for w minutes in the glory of the un- ettable Twenty-Third Psalm.

I

a day when some doubt the very ence of a soul, believing that is all material, a matter of de- or a chapter of accidents, it is to remember the words of this n in regard to the Power that can re one's soul.

materialistic, secularistic age on surface seems unconcerned about oul, and yet I wonder. There is eat up-surge in man's longing to v God and to find that inner e that alone makes life bearable. find it in all walks and conditions fe. At a meeting of railroad exec- s, where the officers of most of mid-West railroads were gath- a young man said, "I know it portant who are our leaders in rica, but many of us know that far more important in regard to spirit and faith that will guide direct, not only our country, but world in the years that are on ahead. That is why some of us on the program committee insisted that we have you — a minister — talk to us to- night." Somehow I firmly believe that that is the thought of all serious and right-thinking people as they face the crisis of this day.

It is extremely difficult to define a word like "soul." We could say it is the inner spirit, the spiritual life, the very heart of our relationship with God. It belongs to the realm of the in- ner spirit that is hard to locate and define.

The Southern doctor some years ago was joshing with the colored cook who had been a close member of the family for years. She had that deep devotion, a singing, simple religion of deep and abiding faith that is a part of the heritage of many of the Negro race. So the doctor said, "You know, I have dissected many bodies but I have never been able to find that soul that you always sing and talk about."

But the cook, undaunted in her re- ligious faith, replied, "Now, look here, doctor, you know better than that. How could you ever expect to find a living soul in someone's dead and worn-out body?" And she went about her work singing in the joy that was hers in the inner soul-power and its relationship to the living Spirit of God.

Dr. Carl Trueblood Chase, profes- sor of bio-chemistry of New York Uni- versity, in his book, **The Frontiers of Science,** has the scientist's approach to the description of the soul. He be- lieves that the soul is responsible for all progress that has been made across the years. He writes:

"The will to know is present in different amounts in every human

brain. It occasionally exists in such intensity that all obstacles are overcome. Occasionally it exists with great strength in the mind of a genius and we have a Newton or a Pasteur.

"Coupled with the will to know is the will to attain the unattained. The soul of man is a very difficult thing to comprehend. In spite of the fact that some contemporary biochemists would like to be able to account for it by the means of a few chemical equations, it is safe to say that no one can tell us just what a human soul is, where it came from, or why it exists. The soul must be described by its properties. It enables man to appreciate beauty. It demands fidelity to friends and directs whatever religious faith a man may have. It is the seat of the will to know and of the desire to attain the unattainable. It has thus controlled to a large extent whatever progress the human race has made toward its ultimate destiny, so far as this progress has not been the result of blind chance. For, if behind the scenes there is a plan, if mankind has not risen to his present high estate as the result of a throw of a pair of cosmic dice, this plan must be made manifest through what is called the human soul."

Or, from a scientist we can move to a modern novel, **The Left Hand of God**, by William E. Barrett. In the novel the Catholic priest, making his way through a mission not far from the Tibet border, is murdered. But before he dies he staggers to the shelter of a Buddhist temple where an American soldier, who had bailed out of a plane as it flew the hump in the last war, had been nursed back to health but now was like a virtual prisoner in that far-off land. As the priest dies, the American lad, Jim Carmody, states in bitterness, "He was a messenger of God but he did not reach his destination." Jan Teng, the Buddhist monk, replied, "There is a purpose. Men die, but purposes are fulfilled. Always."

Carmody punched his left fist into his right palm. "Purpose!" he said impatiently. "What purpose is there to anything? We are born at random. Most of us unwanted, and we live at random without any destination we can see; we die at random when some fool pulls a trigger."

The Buddhist monk stood straight slowly re-wrapping the candle. "All men die in the body," he said. "And even fools know that this is so. No man dies in the soul save by his own hand."

"Soul? What is the soul?"

"What are you? Are you a body only? Do you want nothing save what your body wants?"

"There is intellect," he said.

"And whence comes intellect? If it is of the body, why should it deny the body any of its desires? If there is nothing save the body, which dies and corrupts, how reasonable is an intellect that denies that body anything?"

"You still haven't told me what the soul is," he said.

"Subtract from the body all that you are and you will find your soul." Jan Teng gestured respectfully toward the bed on which the body lay. "That man served his soul and the souls of others. Only his body died. A small matter, that, since it happens to all flesh."

Now the Buddhist monk told the American lad to save his soul. How? "Every man finds his own path. You have found here only occupation for your body."

The rest of the novel deals with this American flyer discovering the rest of himself, his living soul. It is a story that all must write for himself or herself, for life's happiness depends on his discovery of peace of soul.

Life today is a battle to try to rediscover your soul. It is true all over the world. The struggle is taking strange ways to re-awaken the life of man. Many of the down-trodden people are turning to false gods to try to rediscover the secret of life. In America things, bigness, pleasure and

e, often tend to smother out the soul of life. So it is good to turn k to this old Psalm with its for- a for rediscovering our soul- ver. "He restoreth my soul."

II

his Psalm is a message of man's sonal relationship with God. It es an Oriental picture of God as a pherd, satisfying our wants, lead- us beside the still waters, and re- ing our soul.

is a poem credited to the mind hand of David. If David wrote it, was an old man looking back oss the years. It came out of a er experience in his own life as olom, his son, joined his enemies was killed in the ensuing battle. en they brought him word that olom had died, his words were, solom, my son, would God that night have died for thee." Sup- edly in his grief he sought peace solace in his religious life and of his longing heart he penned unforgettable lines of this Psalm. elieve this Psalm came out of a experience. David, the king, fell blundered, his life was covered h scars of inner defeat. He under- nds the need of forgiveness and restoring of soul-power. In the t of his own need he composes deathless lines that for many are r favorite among all of the gems he Psalms. He went back in his d to his own boyhood days when had been a shepherd on Judaean s and in his early thought he re- d his protecting care to the love Father.

wish, in our religious thinking, we ld have the stark realism of this Psalm. When David was saying, e Lord is my shepherd, I shall not t," he was not portraying a re- on in which one was kept safe secure from the dangers of life, a shepherding power that could p us amidst the storms of life. id had many wants that were not sfied. He wanted Bathsheba so h that he was willing to kill for her. He wanted the happiness of the people, so he went to war to bind the northern and southern kingdoms. He wanted the friendship of Saul. Instead, Saul sought to kill him. He wanted happiness for his children. Instead, his children rebelled against him. It was only through struggle and overcoming that David ever came to know the beauty and joy and peace of the soul-restoring power of this Psalm.

But suppose we took the insight of David and related it to our day as David related life to the thought of the Shepherd God. As modern man interprets the thought of David, it will change his concept, for we no longer live in a pastoral day with Oriental shepherds on a hillside watching over the sheep and going after those that may go astray.

A scientist, one with a religious faith of a Robert Milliken, if he were writing this Psalm would not think of God as a Shepherd. Instead he would know that modern scientific investigations have led to the belief that there is a plan, purpose, law and order at the very heart of life. He believes in a cosmos and not a chaos and that the universe is an unfolding story of reason and a creative, integrating force that holds things together. We who are religious know that Power is God! Scientists feel that the universal religion is the cooperation with these eternal laws of life that are revealed at the very heart of the universe. Now it would be difficult to re-create the Twenty-Third Psalm out of the thought of God as law and order and purpose, yet one could say that God is the Creative Power, in the light of modern scientific truth, that makes our dreams come true.

Or, here is the engineer who works with natural laws. He may not always relate it in his thought to God, but he knows that if he is going to be a successful builder he cannot build with whim or caprice. There are always facts, principles and math-

ematical formulas which make engineering successful. He never begins to build a bridge without the thought of the strength and the stress and strain that the materials he is going to use will carry. Is it a far step to the thought that in the spiritual life there are laws, facts, principles that must be obeyed in building that soul-power into life that will enable it to stand and bear the strain and stress of life? The modern engineer may have difficulty in understanding the shepherd's Psalm of King David, but certainly he should be at home with the God as Builder and Sustainer of life.

Even a doctor, in spite of all the help of modern medicine, in a serious operation knows that the healing process depends upon the spirit and attitude of the patient. One surgeon who is eminently successful has the habit of always calling, or having his office do so, the minister of the patient, wanting him to call with a word of prayer, inspiration and hope. A man may prepare the tissues for healing, or cut away that which is diseased, but the healing process is a matter between the individual and life's growing power. When faith and hope are a part of the spirit, the battle for health has a powerful ally in that deep, abiding religious faith.

What the Psalmist was saying is simply that every day of our life there is a power that surrounds and can keep us. There is in life an all-persuasive, ever-present spirit of God that we must do business with whether we desire it or not. Now whether we are scientific in our thinking and dealing with the eternal laws of nature and life, a builder using mathematical truth, a farmer working with growing things, or a member of a family where life is being shaped through ideas and character formed through habits, we live our life in the presence of the Father God. The words of Moses are still true, "The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." Here is the living message of this Psalm — God and our life ar forever one.

III

But what a Psalm of comfort an assurance it also is. It is the positive singing faith. It simply states, "Th Lord is my shepherd, I shall not wan He leadeth me beside still waters This is the Psalm of affirmation an eternal hope.

We are told that one of the easies ways to have spiritual health an mental balance and physical tone i consciously to fill the unconsciou mind with affirmations of truth, pow er and beauty. I believe this is wha Jesus meant when He said, "All thing whatsoever ye pray and ask for, be lieve that ye have received them, an ye shall have them." We know this i true to life. It is not as one upon bed of pain who continually prays fo health that you receive strength. Bu it is as you pray such a prayer as, "G God, I thank thee for the healin forces of life that are ever at work i thy universe, that I can utilize in th recovery of health that here and no I bless thy name for."

Or, it is not only in a petition fo strength that it is received, but a one is willing to cooperate with thos strength-giving forces of God at wor in mind, body and spirit so that pray er is one of thanksgiving for God's gif of strength.

The soul-restoring power of this ol Psalm comes through a personal rela tionship with God, the Author an Giver of life and the relation of life t His shepherding care.

When we look up the root meanin of the word "shepherd" we find tha it meant "friend." So David was sim ply using a word that Jesus later use when He called us "friends of Go and children of the Highest."

This old Psalm also finds the secre of life's healing power beside sti waters and out in nature's cathedra There is no good reason why th Christian should not be both a nature mystic and a Christ-mystic if he is disciple of Christ. Christ often sough

place of still waters where His might commune with God. How s loved blue, wave-washed Lake lee and liked to be with His dis- s by the River Jordan, as He drew nany lessons from nature itself, of of the field ,the vine and the ches, the seed that fell on both and good ground.

away from the jarring noise of city there is need often for the t perspective and the far view comes as one meditates and com- es with God in the silence by the waters.

IV

oreover, as we return to the con- of this Psalm we find courage confidence in a power that can come fear. "Yea, though I walk ugh the valley and shadow of h I shall fear no evil for thou art me." Trust comes because of e relationship with the Spirit of . It is carried over into the New ament in the thought of the reli- s power that the early disciples as they made their great text the ds of Christ, "Lo, I am with you ay, even unto the end of the d."

his Psalm did not come from a weather religion, but out of the n and tempestuousness of the life David, so that he was able to ex- n that there was a power of faith ter than that of fear.

ear has been called the number enemy of our time. Certainly y people, gripped by it, wonder they can overcome it, and, if for their own life, they have a and an apprehension for someone dear to them.

ie disciples realized that in Christ ig the Cross, meeting death, there a Way of life, an inner singing , always victorious which even h could not touch. The disciples pted the legacy of Jesus as He d death and found in His unfor- able word a Way that could over- e fear: "Let not your heart be bled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. Peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The most satisfying of all of Paul's epistles is the Letter to the Philippians, written in prison with the menace of the executioner ever hanging over him. Such grim circumstances give added weight to his words: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

You do not overcome fear simply by being told not to be afraid. Sometimes you can overcome fear by walking up to fear, unmasking it, and discovering that it is only old worries grown large. Sometimes you overcome fear with the discovering of an inner faith and love that is greater than the thought of the danger that may be without. We can overcome fear in regard to loved ones as we commit their life into the keeping of God.

A young mother wondered what she might be able to tell her child that would help the child overcome her fear of a storm and especially the lightning and thunder. So she told the child that God was always with her and that as God was the Master of the storm He wasn't afraid of the storm. So when the wind blew and the rain beat and it thundered, she should remember that she was always with God and God was not afraid.

One afternoon when the mother was away the child was home alone and a terrible storm came up. Rushing home the mother came in calling, "Mary, Mary, where are you?" Frantically rushing around downstairs she did not find Mary, but when she went upstairs she heard a feeble voice saying, "Mother, God and I are under the bed, but He's not afraid." In the storms of life, strange to say, many of us are very close to the reaction of the child.

Fear is not overcome through minimizing the danger, or saying that all is at peace when it is not. But it does come through an ardent belief in God, a deathless trust in Christ, and a faith in the mind and spirit of man that is dedicated to way of Christ. Such a life has a power that ov comes and can understand the me ing of the old Psalm: "Yea, thoug walk not only through the valley a the shadow of death but through troubles of life, I shall not fear Thou art with me."

BESIDE STILL WATERS

Peter H. Pleune, Highland Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

The symbolism of still waters is that of tranquility and calm. In our day we would all like very much, perhaps, to know where those still waters may be found. For many of us in our life today there is not very much of peaceful quiet or serenity of spirit, and some of us seem to be especially vulnerable to the world's storm and stress.

Like a ship at sea, caught in a storm, we are in need of a lee shore. Poise and assurance are hard to come by in today's life. We often have a sense of something dreadful impending. We are not certain of what may lie ahead, and we are quite afraid that it is something worse than the present. So we are often bewildered, and what would help us most would be some secret place where these tensions are banished, some panic-proof shelter "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Especially appropriate for any thoughtful Christian today is Whittier's prayer hymn:

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
'Til all our strivings cease,
Take from our souls the strain
and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess,
The beauty of Thy peace.

We have a habit today of using new words for old wants. Security is the word we use now for an age old desire. Our world is in a mood to pay almost any price for it. And we are actually spending tremendous sums, and passing many laws to produce it. What is back of political and economic disturbances today is the demand for more security. Forms of government have changed and theories national life have been altered all the hope of security.

The same demand is manifest our labor front. The goal is econor security. And it is also very mu present in our current attitude towa religion. Our forefathers fought religious freedom. They were willi to sacrifice for it. Many today se for a religious security with no c involved at all. The challenging mi in religion is quite absent. Let re gion be easy and safe and undistu ing, and the average Christian thir that at last he has really got son thing.

One thing ought to be clear to all is that no man or group of me no party or system can guarant security in any field of life. There no way of running away from u certainty. Nor can we live a use life without being brought up agai the difficult. A ship if it is to ful the purpose for which it is built h not only its safe harbor, but also t wide stormy sea. It canot be a livi vessel, useful to itself, or anyone el if it knows the harbor alone. Life like that.

We cannot lie down, thereaft beside any still waters and dream o days away. But though there is guarantee of safety and security CAN truly find a calmness and tru and strength in a disturbed and u certain world. Jesus did that, and did it supremely. He truly lived untroubled life in a troubled wor He was always tranquil. After almo two thousand years the world is n yet agreed fully on the comple

ing and mission of his life, but where men of every kind are d that the Carpenter of Nazareth with the tranquility and calm all men seek.

w did he do it? If we can dis- that, perhaps we too can live greater quiet and buoyancy of

I

one thing Jesus knew calmness ind because he had a proper ective. He was not absorbed by things. He took a long view, short one. He said to his dis- , "Let the tares grow with the t because the weeds will never a final harvest." He thought it tle matter that the rain fell and nshine shone on both the right- and the unrighteous because, in ng run, unrighteousness has not st of a chance.

ere are three things to which seemed utterly oblivious. One geography. It meant nothing to at all. He never traveled more a hundred miles from home, yet he said was for all peoples in rners of the globe. Secondly, he made any distinctions among Rich and poor, young and old, man or Pharisee, underprivi- or elite, all were alike to him, found in him what they were g. And thirdly, time did not anything to him. He did not be- is active ministry until he was years of age. In a ministry in- ly brief he never seemed to be urry. He was crucified at thirty- Yet he could say, "It is finish- ne of the things to account for is was Jesus' amazing sense of ctive. He did not look for all its to be settled up by Saturday

if we are to live in any sense his spirit of calm most of us a better perspective on life. Size mbers, for one thing, mean too to us. And current opinions are necessarily authoritative. The masters in art were not fail- ures because more people are seemingly satisfied with the artistry of the comic strip. Goodwill is not a failure because certain forces breed the gospel of hate. Religion is not a failure because there are those who will have none of it. Keep your perspective. It has always looked as if the world were going to the dogs. It has not done so yet. God has been on the job for a long, long time in making and maintaining the physical world, and who are we to show impatience if human nature is slow in measuring up to the high venture of the soul he has set for us. With more of Jesus' sense of perspective we will be able to linger oftener and longer by the waters that are still.

II

Akin to a sense of perspective is an appreciation of the present. Jesus certainly lived one day at a time. He knew that for a certainty a cross loomed up for him. He knew the many things he had to do before he was stretched upon it. Yet again and again he said to his disciples, "Let us go apart and rest awhile." He was not in a hurry. It is so easy for us to live in the day after tomorrow, or the middle of next week, and when our heart is set upon the future we miss the meaning and the posibilities of today. I am sure that is the fundamental trouble with many of us. I know that it has often been so with me. Planning only for the future, today's possessions are neglected. Thinking of tomorrow's storms we do not appreciate that today the sun is shining. What a foolish way to live! No wonder that we are strangers to a tranquil spirit, and that any reference to living beside still waters seems only a pretty figure of speech.

Let us live today, and drain it of the blessings that are always present, and then something of a more tranquil spirit will be sure to come to us. It is letting the preparations for tomorrow cloud today's sky that makes for loss of assurance. Remember too that Jesus said, "Sufficient for the day

is the evil thereof." He meant by that that even tomorrow's evils can be more resourcefully met if today's quietness is not invaded by them. Today is yours; the sun is shining. We do not know about tomorrow, but, as the Psalmist said, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." An appreciation of the present will make for more of the sense of security we seek than any constant restless concern about tomorrow. That was truly Jesus' approach to life.

III

And he who had learned the mastery of life did it not only through a sense of perspective, and a use of the present, but he had also learned to live with a sense of the presence of God in his world. Calmness of soul, and any sense of security, does **not** turn upon external conditions, nor is it based upon material guarantees or economic advantages though we strive so much for these. It is the invisible things of our world that are the real and abiding. We have a Book which points us to the unseen and eternal. A daily use of it would give us more daily peace and confidence. During the war our men in service reported that the Bibles most appreciated by them were those with marked passages so that their unfamiliar fingers might readily find the great fundamental assurances of the Word. These great assurances always counsel quietness and trust because God is a part of life. To be familiar with scripture is one way to an awareness that we do not walk alone. However hard our path may be there is another keeping step with us. Any man who lives with eternity in his heart will find a new calm in his spirit. It is no wonder that many people are restless and distracted since they have paid so little attention to God's counsel in his Word. Anyone who has no more to fall back upon than they have is sure to live with a dreadful sense of stress. Always the untoward, fretting things of life lie close to the surface, but he whose life is hid with Christ in God co to an inescapable peace.

There are souls who through s shine and rain, pain and joy, te and laughter, through Winter Summer meet life bravely beca the words, "Lord, thou hast been dwelling place in all generatio are not just words to them. Disi sioned and disappointed, broken dismayed, they have found Go light that no blackout can dim, arm no burden can tire, a defence attack can break through. The wo of ancient Isaiah are living truth them, "Thou wilt keep him in per peace whose mind is stayed on th

IV

And tranquility of mind and he have no suggestion of mere idlen or a Pollyanna assurance that thi might be worse. It means much m than that. It means enough calmn to face facts squarely and stead and to arise with a joy and a di plined strength and assurance t useful, uncomplaining life in a wo in which God is still the Master.

Dr. W. H. Foukes wrote a pa phrase of Tennyson's "Crossing Bar" in which the note is on life, death. He calls it "Sunrise." It is morning prayer of a calm and str soul facing the day:

Sunrise and morning star,
And one clear call to give,
And may there be no clouding o
the skies
When I set out to live;
But such a glow as shining seem
ablaze,
Too full for shade or night,
When that which drew me fro
the sun's vast rays
Bursts forth in light.

Daylight and morning bell,
And after that, to work,
And may there be no soft or sub
tle spell
To make me shirk;
For though into a maze of to
and strife

y task may set my way,
ıope to meet my Master life to

life,
As I shall live today.

RESTORES MY SOUL

Gene E. Bartlett, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

ɔbably no one in this congrega-
has had the experience of receiv-
notice that his bank account is
drawn! It is a rude awakening to
ver that you have gone beyond
resources. Nor is it the kind of
tion which can be handled as the
g wife tried to meet it, acording
e story. When she heard that she
overdrawn at the bank, she in-
l that it couldn't be true, because
ıad plenty of checks left in her
!

en more important, and perhaps
common, is the experience of
overdrawn spiritually. A recent
l described a young man of Jew-
ıith who had neglected his syna-
e for a period of years. When a
of crisis came he went back to
help. But he discovered, as he
t, that his account had dwindled
neglect. It wasn't enough to
on.

e shall be speaking to an urgent
ɛrn need, therefore, when we
for a few moments about the re-
able affirmation which is at the
of the 23rd Psalm. They are
ɔeloved words, "He restores my
" The whole mood of the passage
e of rest and renewal.

ıe day this week I left the prepa-
n of this sermon and set out to
a call in another part of the
As I drove I was thinking about
words. It was about four o'clock
e afternoon, and in a little while
ınd myself moving along in the
ɔing traffic of the freeway sur-
ded by all the sights and the
ds of the city. Somehow the
geness of it struck me. How dif-
t this setting from the quiet
which had inspired the Psalm-
Here were no green pastures, no
waters — far from it. And that's
sely why our need is so urgent.

We above all people need to be restored in our souls. Is there any spiritual need quite as urgent as this? It is almost the mark of our time — struggling with weariness of spirit, mental fatigue, a haunting sense that life is about to hand us a notice that we are spiritually overdrawn. We shall do well to see what it means in our time to find that "He restores my soul."

I

It begins when we honestly accept this as a need which will always be with us. If you were to ask how long will you be dependent upon God for the restoring of your soul, the answer must be, "As long as you live." The first act of life is your utter dependence upon God every moment of your life, every breath that you take. We could not live if we did not restore our souls.

Look at any life a moment, and see how this truth runs all through it. It is so evidently true physically. The strongest of us can store up strength only for a day or so. In a short time it will be spent, and we shall be faced with a commanding need to rest so that physical strength may be restored. It will be so as long as we live.

It is equally true mentally. The experience is there for all to see. Sometimes you say, I am so tired that I can't even think. And your fatigue may be of the mind as well as of the body. Perhaps you have had the experience of coming home at night exhausted in body and mind. Then by an effort of will you get ready and go to a concert. There under the flow of great music you are restored until you come out free and renewed. It's a need we will always have.

We even need to have our loving

relationships restored. That's why the times of being together in a family are so important. Love is renewed by anniversaries and the fun within the family and the times of worship together. Even love is restored daily.

Is it surprising, therefore, that it should be so in the matters of the soul? I shall not seek to become involved in any definition of what we mean when we speak of the soul. It is enough to know that somewhere at the center of life there is that from which comes our faith ,our courage, our joy, our love, our worship. There is a vital core to life, and everyone knows it whatever he may call it. And it is that center which God renews when we wait upon Him and open our lives that it may be so.

What freedom there is in finally accepting the fact that you were meant for dependence, for those times of meeting with Him whether in a sanctuary like this or some quiet place known only to you. Without those meetings, the soul grows weary just as the body fails for want of rest or the mind for want of stimulus or love for want of sharing. Some place in life there must be the times when you let Him lead you beside the still waters or the place of lying down in green pastures that your soul may be restored. And the miracle will come again of faith made sufficient, a courage restored, a love that searches out gladly, and a joy that makes the heart sing. Don't be discouraged if you can keep it only a little time. It only means that you will need to go back to your source of renewal over and over and over again. You are simply face to face with the fact of your inescapable dependence upon God. There is freedom in accepting the dependence that cannot be changed.

II

But to complete it, we need to accept something even deeper. It is the assurance that God's renewal will not be withheld. "He restores my soul." That has no reservation in it. It is a direct and clear affirmation. It doesn't say He may or sometimes He does there is a chance. It simply says H restores my soul.

I for one cannot pass this by wit out stopping for a moment at lea just to wonder at it. There is so mu in our world that calls us to reve ence. One side of it is the fact th God has created so wonderfully. C anyone look at this world which G has created and not be led to reve ence? Or can you see the miracle one life, growing from a single cell the complexity of a working, worshi ping person and not stand in awe b fore God who created him? To s how God creates is a cause of wond But equally I find my own reveren heightened by the way in which G renews His creation. It would be wo derful if He had just done it onc But when He does it day after da moment after moment, you can on stand in wonder before the myste and the miracle of God! Every tin you take a breath, every night y lie down to rest, every day that yo body is healed, every time you con from your prayer with your faith r stored, you have been back to t Garden of Eden and seen the mirac of creation again. Oh, the wonder renewal! Who can stand before t fact of restoration without being l to reverence? This God whom w worship is not one who lived a created in some distant time beyo our imagination; He is one living the very moment in which we no live. He was then and there; He here and now. In this moment he creating, doing it all over again the renewal of life.

More than anything else I ho that our praying may take this in account. Recently when I finished r morning devotions I heard, as were, the echo of my own prayin And on that second thought it b came evident what I had done. M prayer seemed to assume that its pu pose was to help God make up H mind. The note in it had been som thing like this: Oh, God, do this,

is be your decision, or will you after this for me? Or be this of God, be loving, be gracious, demptive. And then I realized ll the time I should have known God was all of these and more, y my request but by His very e. The purpose of prayer is not suade Him, but to prepare me. s not His mind that wavered andered, it was mine. It was not art that needed to be more lov- was mine. It was not He who d to be enlightened, it was I. e prayer that is most real is hich assumes that God is con- and trustworthy and loving. is receiving what He has al- willed to give.

t there a restoring of our souls t kind of prayer? I am sure is. Before this day has passed, to God in that spirit. He has y given His word in Christ that loving, redemptive, seeking. Let your prayer be an opening of your life, and it will be restored. How beautifully Phillips Brooks put it in classic words which can hardly be quoted too often: "Oh, do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. You shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come in you by the grace of God."

How much has been caught in four small words, "He restores my soul." These words stand at the point where two great truths cross each other. The first is the fact of our dependence which cannot be changed. But the second is the fact of God's dependability which cannot be doubted. The faith by which the modern man must live is right where these two things meet.